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ABSTRACT

This program aimed to help disadvantaged children enter kindergarten by giving them preschool experiences which were mainly designed to augment conceptual and cognitive development. The pupils, drawn from an economically depressed area, were mostly black three- and four-year-old children. In addition to augmenting conceptual and cognitive development, the program emphasized stimulation of interest and curiosity, improvement of language skills, social-emotional adjustment, school-parent understanding, detection and remediation of physical defects and other health problems, detection and remediation of learning and developmental problems, and preservice and inservice training for teachers. Examples of specific lessons are given. Children's gains were measured by the Pictorial Test of Intelligence. Tables giving test data are included. (KG)

THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM Oakland, California

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THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

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FOREWORD

This project report is part of an independent study of selected exemplary programs for the education of disadvantaged children completed by the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., under contract with the U.S. Office of Education.

The researchers report this project significantly improved the educational attainment of the disadvantaged children involved. Other communities, in reviewing the educational needs of the disadvantaged youngsters they serve, may wish to use this project as a model - adapting it to their specific requirements and resources.

**Bureau of Elementary and Secondary
Education**

THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Introduction

The aim of this program was to prepare disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten by giving them preschool experiences. These experiences were chiefly designed to augment the conceptual and cognitive development of the children.

The pupils in the program were mostly Negro 3- and 4-year olds. About half were boys. Their parents had to give consent for them to be included in the program. They were drawn from neighborhoods which were economically depressed, with high unemployment rates and substandard housing. Many of the families in these districts were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children, including all those having children in the program. The centers for the program were located in schools containing over 80% Negro children, with one exception.

The program began in September 1966, although preschool centers had operated for several years previously under Ford Foundation, Oakland Public Schools, and Economic Opportunity Act funding. The experience gained in the earlier projects was used to build this program.

About 600 pupils attended the 12 preschool centers in each academic year. They were taught in some 40 classes.

The success of the program was shown by a comparison of scores of children in the program and of scores of controls on the Pictorial Test of Intelligence. Gains made by children in the preschool centers were considerable, placing them about 9 IQ points above children from the same neighborhoods who had not attended preschool.

Personnel

A. Supervisor

A teacher on special assignment was full-time supervisor of the program. She had considerable classroom experience and was fully certificated as a teacher. She had overall responsibility for activities in the program.

B. Co-Supervisor

A second teacher on special assignment was full-time co-supervisor. Like the supervisor, she was fully qualified and experienced, but her duties were particularly to coordinate the parent involvement aspects of the program, including directing the assignments of the school-community workers (see page 2.)

C. Evaluator

A part-time evaluator was available to assess the success of the program each year. She was also a teacher on special assignment. She prepared an annual report (see Quoted Sources) containing analyses of evaluation data collected during the preschool program's testing sessions.

D. Teachers

In both years of the program (1966-67 and 1967-68), 20 female teachers were employed. In 1967-68, they taught 40 classes in double sessions. All were certificated, and many had qualifications in early childhood education. About half were Negro.

E. Teacher Aides

One part-time teacher aide was employed for each class, i.e., 40. Aides were members of the communities from which the children were drawn, and were almost all Negro. They were assigned to a wide variety of tasks in the classroom by the teachers. Often they helped pupils' language development by stimulating discussion while the pupils were engaged in learning experiences.

F. Parent Volunteers

The parents were asked to participate in the program to the extent that at least one would be available in each class to help the teacher and the teacher aide. Parent volunteers were not paid. They undertook tasks similar to those of the teacher aides. One parent from each class functioned as a parent leader. The parent leaders met at least once a month in a parent group specifically designed to develop leadership potential.

G. School-community Workers

One full-time and six part-time school-community workers were employed in the program to visit both the classrooms and the homes. They brought film slides and learning materials to the homes to demonstrate what happened in the preschool; partly to encourage attendance, partly to recruit for the following year. They attended in-service training meetings of the program staff. Like the teacher aides, they were drawn from the communities where the program operated.

H. Testers

The four testers were recruited from graduate students working towards the master's degree at the University of California and Mills College. These paid personnel were given orientation in test administration procedures. Testers did not know which of the children being tested were in the program and which were in the comparison (no treatment) group.

Three full-time school nurses were available to assist with health instruction, immunizations, and general health matters in the program.

Three health aides also worked part time in the program. They were involved in medical examinations, and in instruction on health matters in the classrooms.

A full-time psychologist worked with referred pupils in the program, dealing with learning and developmental problems.

Methodology: General

The stated objectives of the Oakland Preschool Program were to help disadvantaged children increase their potential for early success in school and to help each child realize more fully his potential for intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development (Oakland Public Schools Research Department, 1968). Specific program objectives, paraphrased below and presented with examples of illustrative activities, represent major segments of the program.

A. Augmentation of Conceptual and Cognitive Development of the Children

Throughout the school day such manipulative materials as puzzles, pegboards, and lotto games were utilized to teach the children to categorize, to recognize similarities and differences, and to recognize number symbols. Trips to places in the community provided enrichment and the opportunity for children to relate what they had learned in the classroom to another environment. In addition, many of the program activities described under program objectives listed below also augmented the conceptual and the cognitive development of the children.

B. Improvement of Language Skills

The improvement of the language skills of the children was undertaken in several ways. The "Housekeeping Corner" was used for telephone conversations and other forms of dramatic play. Children were encouraged to name and to label the manipulative materials which they used as well as to name and to talk about the foods provided for them at "Snack Time." "Listening Center" activities included hearing tapes and records of music and stories. Language Master materials were used to teach the children to recognize their own names and to develop a basic vocabulary, while the daily language period reinforced language skills through such activities as retelling stories and playing games which emphasized auditory discrimination. Finally, daily opportunities for children to talk with individual preschool staff personnel and parent volunteers expanded and reinforced language skills of these children.

C. Stimulation of Interest and Curiosity

Excursions to local places of interest, music and rhythm activities, science experiments with magnets and floating objects, classroom experiences with animals, and the opportunity to plant seeds and watch flowers and vegetables grow were a few of the many program activities designed to stimulate the interest and curiosity of the children.

D. Improvement of Social-Emotional Adjustment

The program provided the preschoolers with an opportunity to be with other children and with interested adults who were not in their immediate family setting. These encounters were utilized by preschool staff personnel and parent volunteers to encourage the development and redirection of the copying, social, and communication behavior of the children, in an effort to improve their general relationships with others and their eventual adaptation to the kindergarten environment.

E. Improvement of School-Parent Understanding

Meeting parents on a daily contact basis and involving them in the center were the means employed to improve school-parent understanding. In addition, monthly parent meetings were held at each of the 12 centers. The meetings, both educational and social in emphasis, enabled parents to become acquainted with the preschool staff and to acquire information about the program. Nutrition, child growth and development, and other topics of interest to parents were discussed at later meetings.

F. Detection and Remediation of Physical Defects and Other Health Problems

The preschool public health nurses implemented the health program by working closely with parents and serving as a health education resource for the teaching staff. The three nurses each were assigned to approximately 200 children. Specific goals of the health services program were as follows: to assist parents and children in understanding the importance of being in the best possible physical and mental health for a good start in school; to obtain a complete health history of each child; to provide hearing and vision screening tests for each child; to refer children with medical and dental problems for follow-up and treatment (all children were eligible for medical and dental care through the state Medicare Program); and to see that children were adequately immunized and had tuberculin tests.

G. Detection and Remediation of Learning and Developmental Problems

The preschool psychologist worked with parents and the staff to provide a suitable learning environment for children with specific learning and developmental problems. She also identified children to be considered for enrollment in gifted or special classes when they entered kindergarten. In addition, the psychologist helped parents and staff to relate the developmental processes of parenthood to the curriculum and took part in the parent education activities.

H. Pre- and In-service Training

The program supervisor and her staff provided pre-service and in-service training for teachers, teacher aides, community aides, and nurses in the areas of child growth and development, health education, development of techniques for working with preschool children and their parents, and the uses and purposes of preschool equipment and materials. Presentations were made at these meetings by leading consultants in the

field of preschool education. As a follow-up to the discussion topic, visitations were made to preschool centers to observe the teacher and the teacher aide in action, the physical setup, and the use of equipment and materials. A special committee of five teachers, each teacher from a different geographical area, helped to screen speakers for in-service meetings and to plan centrally organized meetings and other in-service activities. Experts also addressed teachers at their regular staff meetings, where on-going development, evaluation, and refinement of the program were emphasized. Daily in-service training for teacher aides took place at each of the 12 centers under the direct supervision of the preschool teacher. These daily sessions lasted about 30 minutes.

The adult-pupil ratio in each classroom was about 3 or 4 adults to 15 children. In each case, the teacher "managed" the instructional environment, leading her team of one teacher aide and one or two parent volunteers. In addition, she collaborated with the nurse and the psychologist in matters relating to the physical and emotional well-being of her pupils. Finally, she consulted with the community workers regarding their visits to the classroom and to the children's homes.

The schedule for a typical day in the Oakland Preschool Program is presented in Table 1. The session generally lasted about 3 hours.

Methodology: Specific

The following are specific examples of three language development activities (Oakland Public Schools, Urban Educational Services, undated).

A. Language Awareness/Letter Matching Lesson

Purpose: To become familiar with configuration of words which label pictures.

Material: Set of wooden letters and matching picture cards or flannel board and letters.

Instruction: Child names picture on card, looks at word on picture card and manipulates letters, matching to outlined letters on card. Each letter is exact size of printed letter. Same thing may be done with flannel board and letters. Teacher next puts up appropriate word (one used in lesson) and child matches word, letter for letter.

B. Literature Lesson

Purpose: To let the children become familiar with the Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes.

Material: Flannel Story - Little Miss Muffet

TABLE 1

A Typical Preschool Day in the Oakland Preschool Program

Language Development (15 minutes)

Examples: speech production, language awareness, language patterns, vocabulary enrichment, literature, visual perception, auditory discrimination, cognitive development.

Either the whole class or small groups took part, with considerable variation in methodology to suit preferences and capabilities of individual teachers. The lessons were planned to take into account verbal and physical aspects of the various Language Development activities.

Enriching Experiences--Any time during the day in conjunction with or as follow-up to Language Development activities.

Examples:

audiovisual materials (tape recorder, filmstrips, posters, pictures, movies, magazines, objects from home and school, and prints, slides, and movies of the children)
excursions and trips
cooking and eating experiences
use of library (browsing, research, sharing books, checking out books, library standards, care of books, trip to public library, getting card)
resource people and visitors (school nurse and doctor, principal, other teachers, librarian, policeman, students [playing violin, sharing pets], school monitors, and parents [playing guitar, sharing games and animals])
science experiences (planting, evaporation, weather, cocoon, hatching chicks, using yeast, exploring five senses, snails and worms, shadows, waterlife, air experiments, floating experiments, awareness of environment, measuring)
assemblies or joint activities with kindergarten or other classes (puppet show, music activity, visits to and from kindergarten on group and individual basis, participating in assemblies, reading to preschoolers by students from other classes)

Nutrition (20 minutes)

Examples: informal conversation, manners, tasting experiences, pouring and serving.

Story Groups (20 minutes)

Examples: interaction with story, verbalizing.

Physical Development (25 minutes)

Examples: concepts about space, large muscle coordination, physical fitness, creative rhythms, socializing experiences.

Creative Arts (40 minutes)

Examples: construction, large blocks, painting, cutting-pasting-collage, clay, water play, music, creative rhythms.

[Adapted from Appendixes B and C, pp. 51-55, Oakland Public Schools Research Department, 1968. See Quoted Sources.]

Instruction:

Tell the rhyme using the flannel characters.
Retell and let the children help finish parts, e.g.,
"and down came a _____."

Variation-1 Let a child put the appropriate pieces on flannel board as the story is told.

Variation-2 Let a child tell the rhyme as the teacher or another child puts on the pieces.

Variation-3 Talk about the rhymes and help children think about how many things happened in the story.

1. Miss Muffet sat down.
2. She ate.
3. Spider came.
4. He sat down.
5. Miss Muffet ran away.

This should clarify the story and the sequence.

To emphasize this, mix up the story and have the children tell you what is wrong, e.g., "The spider sat down to eat and Miss Muffet came and frightened him."

C. Cognitive Development Lesson

Purpose: To learn the names of various signs and to relate them to pictures of signs, etc.

Material: Flannel board pieces to community set.

Instruction:

Prepare children for walk by discussing what to look for. Small groups assigned to a parent-aide work well for walks so the children may talk while walking and observing. Notice signs and stop lights. Follow up by using flannel pieces. Discuss where a particular sign was, what it says and differences in signs. Review vocabulary learned during the next several days. Other follow-up suggestions:

1. Make chart showing signs.
2. Write and display simple story about walk.
3. Children draw pictures of signs.
4. Children cut out pictures from magazines of things seen on walk.
5. Take pictures on walk, use for review of vocabulary. Show pictures on opaque projector to extend language development.

D. Aides

Table 2 represents a sample of specific ways in which aides interacted in the program at various points in a single day's session.

TABLE 2

Sample Schedule of Aides' Interaction
in the Oakland Preschool Program

Manipulative Activity (self-selected) (35 minutes)

Read to child; encouraged child to retell story using puppets; gave suggestions for using materials such as pegs and mosaics to color or match designs; named letters child used in "fit-a-space"; helped blind-fold child for matching-textures-and-shapes activity; helped child with sorting, categorizing, and sequence games; took attendance.

Language Development (30 minutes)

Sat with children for group lesson; participated with children and encouraged those who needed it; led finger plays or songs as teacher suggested; led small-group discussions on weather, calendar, and classroom pets; prepared snack with child helper.

Snack (15 minutes)

Sat with assigned group; encouraged good manners; encouraged child participation in passing food and pouring milk; encouraged conversation and started one, if necessary, by using picture or object; related clean-up to classroom standards and individual responsibilities; developed concepts such as color, number, size.

Story Groups (20 minutes)

Read story to groups; encouraged child to discuss pictures and talk about story; let children suggest books to read.

Physical Development (30 minutes)

Took out equipment for physical development; participated with children in ball and jump-rope play and organized games; encouraged children to verbalize what they were doing; encouraged children to play creatively on equipment; encouraged developmental use of materials such as balancing, chinning, and climbing.

Creative Arts (40 minutes)

Made a variety of material readily available; encouraged children to talk about art experiences (did not make suggestions); encouraged correct use of materials and supervised clean-up; participated in walks, science experiences, or library visits; assisted in preparation for going home--notes, children's work, and so on.

Evaluation with Teacher (10 minutes)

Discussed and made suggestions for working with children; discussed use of materials; discussed children's emotional and social growth and helped make anecdotal records; helped evaluate skills; discussed plans for following day.

Evening

Participated in adult education classes for parents and teachers. These classes, held at each of the centers twice a month for 1 or 2 hours, were organized in various ways. Some incorporated resource people and/or films, followed by discussion. In others, the discussion followed a workshop, or observation, or sharing of experiences. Principles of early childhood education and suggestions from parents were considered in devising techniques for improving parents' effectiveness in the classroom.

[Adapted from Oakland Public Schools, Special Urban Educational Services, Office of Human Relations, 1967.]

Evaluation

A. Measures of Achievement

The Pictorial Test of Intelligence was the standardized measure used to assess progress of children in the program. Three groups of program pupils provided data. First, 30 pupils (out of 51 who attended preschool for three semesters before entering kindergarten in September 1968) were tested in March 1967, and in October-November 1968. Second, 31 pupils (out of 81 randomly sampled from the 40 classes) who had attended the program for two semesters were tested in October-November 1967, and again in June 1968. Third, 31 pupils (from the same sample as the second group) who had attended for two semesters were tested in October-November 1967, and again in September-October 1968.

A comparison group, made up of 81 children who had not attended preschool but who were in the same kindergarten classes as program pupils, was tested in September-November 1967. Like the program children, the comparison children were from families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and lived in the same neighborhoods. The comparison group was not tested earlier than kindergarten. The groups and the testing scheduled are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3

**Groups of Pupils Tested in the
Oakland Preschool Program, and
the Testing Schedule**

Group	Testing Schedule			
	Spring 1967	Fall 1967	Summer 1968	Fall 1968
I (3-semester)	Yes	No	No	Yes
II (2-semester)	Not in school	Yes	Yes	No
III (2-semester)	Not in school	Yes	No	Yes
Control (no treatment)	Not in school	Yes	No	No

The data obtained from the testings are summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 4

**Pictorial Test of Intelligence Means for
Groups of Pupils in the Oakland Preschool Program**

Group	N	Testing Schedule			
		Spring 1967	Fall 1967	Summer 1968	Fall 1968
I (3-semester)	30	85.8	Not tested	Not tested	92.4*
II (2-semester)	31	Not in school	80.0	93.4*	Not tested
III (2-semester)	31	Not in school	84.2	Not tested	89.8*
Control (no treatment)	81	Not in school	83.0*	Not tested	Not tested

*Data obtained for comparative purposes (see p. 11).

Table 4 shows that pupils in Group I scored about 9 IQ points more on the test than did the comparison group. Group II, tested before the summer vacation but after only two semesters, showed the same relative status. Group III, tested after the summer vacation, averaged about 7 IQ points more than the comparison group. The differences between the experimental groups and the comparison group were statistically significant beyond the 5% level in each case, after t tests had been applied to the means. Gains made by each of the experimental groups were also statistically significant, beyond the 1% level. The most valid comparisons of gains, however, are those from fall testing (Groups I and II), since that was the time of year when the control group was tested.

Group I may not have been fully representative of the program population, but Groups II and III were randomly selected. The control group offered as sound a comparison as could be found without pretesting children not in the preschool.

B. Other Evaluation Indices

In this program, many other sources or instruments were used for evaluation besides the Pictorial Test of Intelligence. They included a teacher rating scale; a staff questionnaire; a parent questionnaire; a parent leader questionnaire; the psychologist's and nurses' referral lists; daily records kept by the school-community workers, the psychologist, and the health aides; and other records. A parent interview survey was also conducted.

The general picture of the program presented by these ratings and records was extremely favorable to the program in most areas; in a few instances there was a need for changes and improvement.

Budget

The cost per pupil of the preschool program was a little over \$1000 per year, including every provision and service. Actual instruction accounted for about 55%, and capital items about 15%. The funds for the program were obtained under California Assembly Bill 1331.

Temporary buildings were erected for the program, and personnel were hired as listed in the Personnel section. New materials were purchased, some in each year, but their total cost amounted to a very small percentage of the budget.

Modifications and Suggestions

The curriculum and instructional methods used in the preschool program are under continuous review in order to identify the components which have a significant impact on the children's cognitive development.

Close attention is to be paid to improving articulation between the preschool program and the conventional kindergarten classes which the program children enter.

In-service training for teachers and aides will include instruction in effective techniques for improving communication between parents and the program staff.

Use of a mobile unit for immunizing children is being considered as a more efficient and economical alternative to the present method of requiring parents to make appointments and transport their children for this purpose. (Parents would still be required to do the latter for their child's health examination.)

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